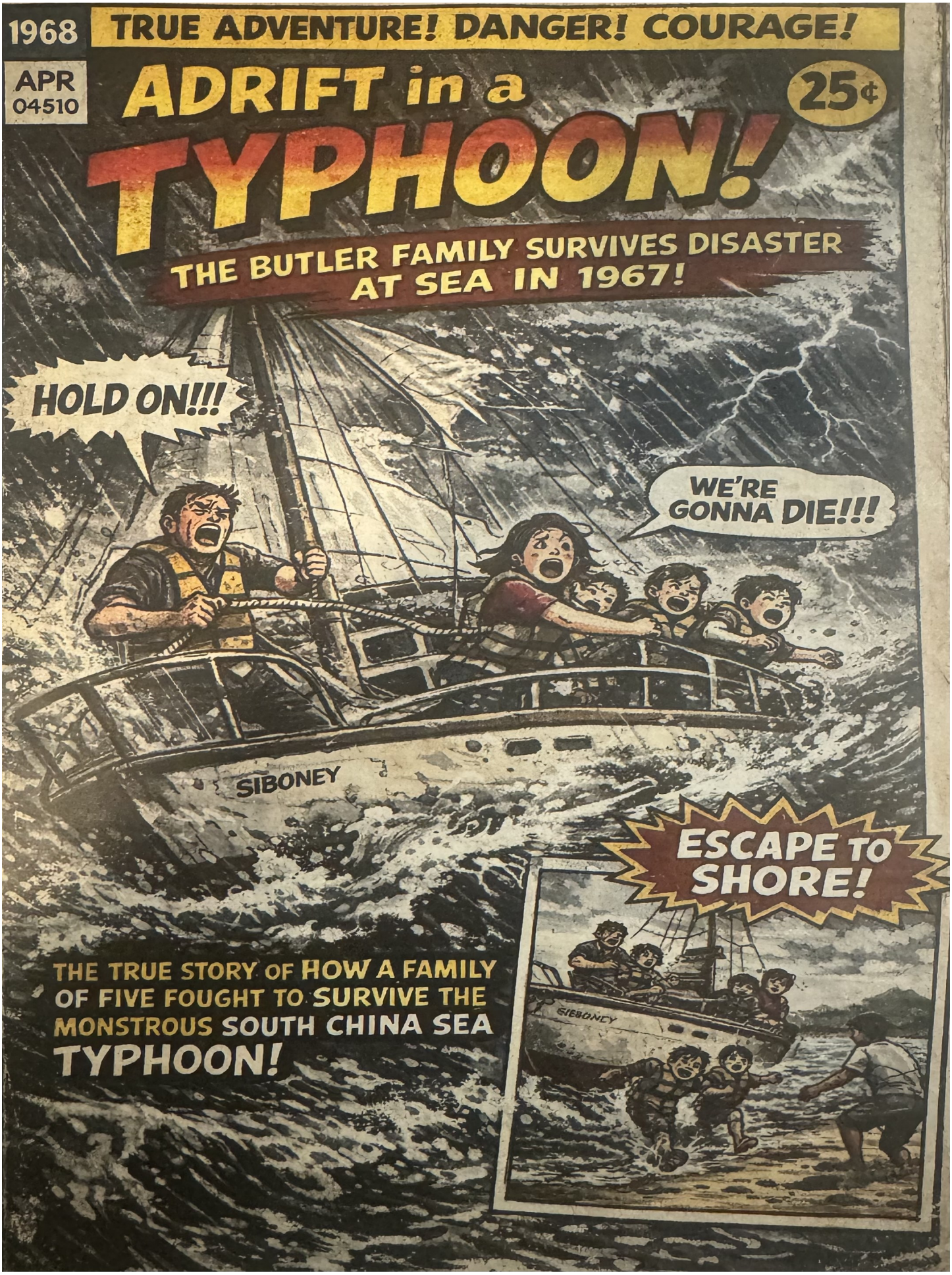
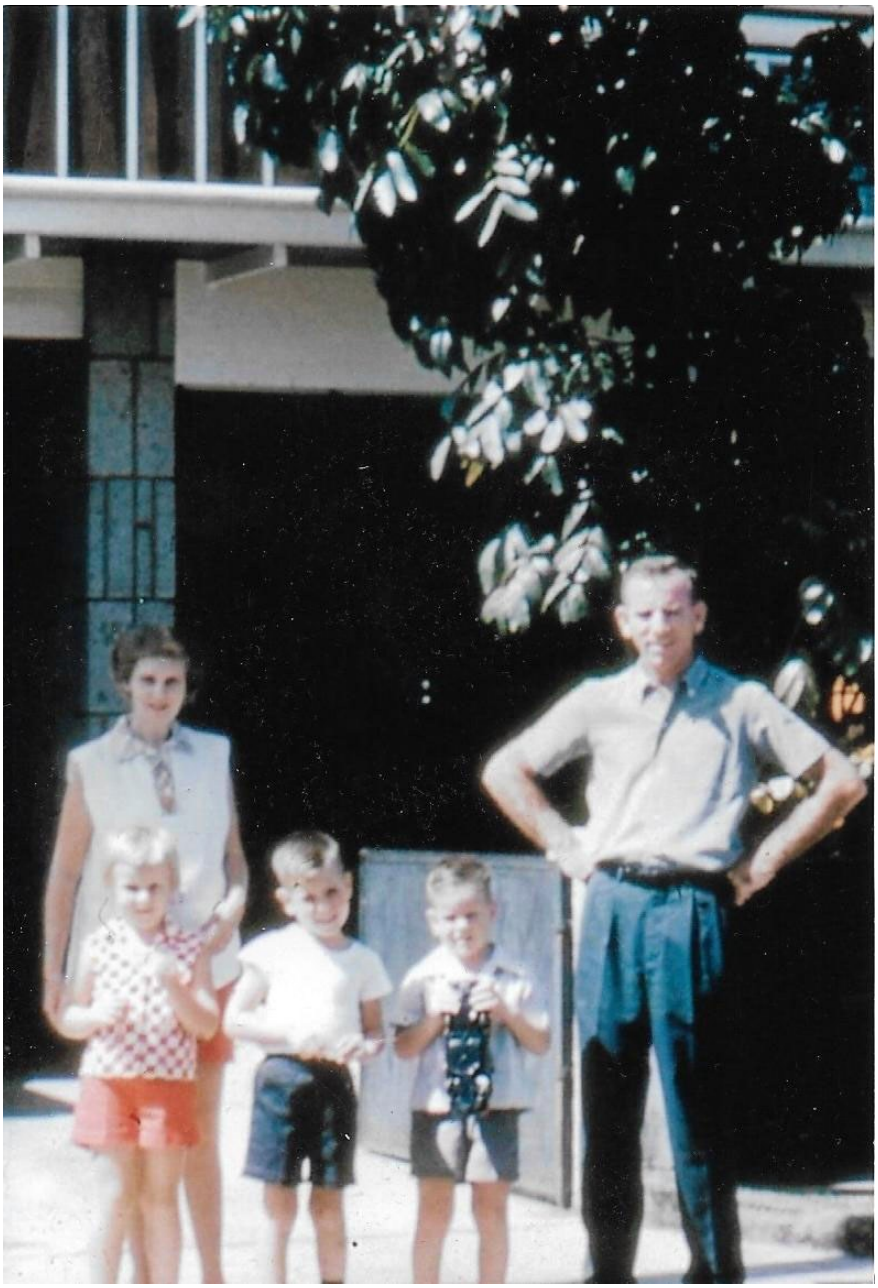

1968
TRUE ADVENTURE! DANGER! COURAGE!
APR
04510
ADRIFT in a
TYPHOON!
25¢
THE BUTLER FAMILY SURVIVES DISASTER AT SEA IN 1967!
HOLD ON!!!
WE'RE GONNA DIE!!!
SIBONEY
ESCAPE TO SHORE!
THE TRUE STORY OF HOW A FAMILY OF FIVE FOUGHT TO SURVIVE THE MONSTROUS SOUTH CHINA SEA TYPHOON!

In 1960, the Butler family moved to Manila Philippines. We had to leave our brand new house in Havana Cuba and move all of a sudden because there was a revolution there. It was scary. Manila wasn't scary at all.

We moved to a nice house in San Lorenzo Village, Makati. My room was upstairs and my brothers Billy and Jimmy slept downstairs. I liked living there. We had a lot of friends in the neighborhood and pretty soon started going to school. First, we went to a little neighborhood school and then we all went to the American School of Manila, a much bigger school. It was all in English so we were good!



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While we lived in our new house we had a new baby. It was a girl this time. I was happy because I was the only girl. The new baby is named Sally Catherine Butler. Sally, after my grandmother Ofelia Salazar and Catherine after my aunt Catherine. I enjoyed feeding her and playing with her when she got older.

A few years after Sally was born we were all happy to welcome our new little brother Joe, He was a little confused sometimes and thought I was his mom. It was fun to play mom.

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In November 1967, when I was 12 years old, we had a long weekend off from school and my parents decided to take the older kids on an adventure. Sally and Joey were too small to be on the boat because for one thing Sally and Joey couldn't swim! Plus Joe was still in diapers :)

So we packed our swimsuits, t-shirts, flip-flops and hats and food for a few days and headed for the boat. Our destination was an isolated cove that was about a 1/2 day sail from Manila Yacht club, where my dad's 38 foot sloop Siboney was moored. We were all very excited because we knew that a bunch of other boats from the yacht club would be there too.

With almost no wind, we sailed slowly through the early morning down the 30-mile stretch of Manila Bay out to Corregidor (a famous World War II battle sight) and turned out into the beautiful South China Sea. My brothers and I helped sail the boat. My brothers helped put up sails and pull in the sails with the ropes attached to them. I sometimes helped steer the boat. To steer the boat, you would just pull on the long wooden stick near the back of the boat called the tiller. While sailing, my brothers and I would either fish, or just kick our feet overboard and feel the fast moving water. Sometimes, if it wasn't too windy or rough, my dad would throw a rope off the back of the boat and let my brothers hold on and get pulled by the boat. I preferred not to do this activity. (I knew there were sharks in the ocean around there. My brothers didn't seem to care though).

SIBONEY—our boat

We would often see a school of dolphins jumping playfully. The dolphins loved being around people and their boats and would stay with us for an hour or more sometimes. Maybe for them watching and following the humans is entertaining?

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Here's a little map showing the Philippines. We all thought it looked like a person. Did you know that the Philippines has over seven thousand islands? (7, 641 to be exact) We lived on the island of Luzon, the biggest one, that looks like the head of the person

The red line shows our sailing trip. While it wasn't too many miles, sailboats go super slow so it took a lot longer than driving.

We didn't take too many long car trips in the Philippines. Apparently it was safer to go sailing to remote places than to try to drive to them. I was kind of worried about pirates but my dad said not to worry …

Anyway, we finally made it to the beach. As I remember we left in the morning and got there just in time for dinner.

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White Sands Beach is a great beach! We anchored near the beach in a peaceful cove along with about eight other boats from the Manila Yacht club. Most of the boats were other families with their children. We got into the little wooden dinghy that my dad kept roped to the top of the cabin and paddled to shore. Once there we met up with other kids and spent the rest of the day exploring the beautiful beach, rock climbing, snorkeling, and collecting beautiful sea shells. This tranquil island routine continued all day Thursday. After a great dinner Thursday night, we had a peaceful night, sleeping on deck under a beautiful starry night sky.

Rowing in the dinghy

Our days were full of adventure. We hiked all the way over to the far point and found a cave full of sea urchins. We were barefoot so had to be careful not to step on them! We even saw a few small sharks close to shore.

We had peaceful nights sleeping on deck under a beautiful starry night sky. It's amazing how many stars can be seen when you are out in the ocean!

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Friday, after spending two nights with our friends, we decided to go explore the island we could see off in the distance. It was just about an hour's sail away. We took off without letting anyone know where we were going (oops)!

After a day of fun in the sun on Fortune Island, we sailed back to the cove, expecting to see all of our friends' boats and a party starting on the beach. To our surprise, the cove was empty! Where were all the boats? Not a single boat was there waiting for us. We thought it was odd but went ahead and cooked dinner.

But ... after we had been there about 10 minutes, a Filipino man in a small boat came over to give us some very important information. "Sir, haven't you heard that a terrible typhoon (the Southern Hemisphere version of a hurricane) is headed straight for this area and that is due to hit Manila within 24 hours?"

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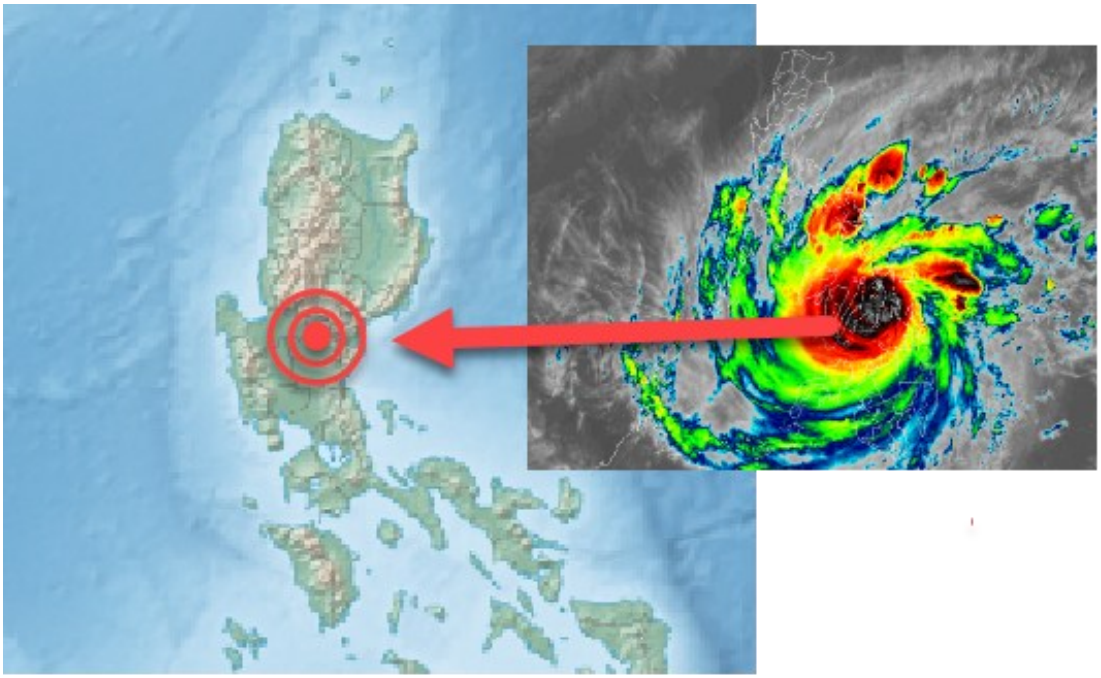
What a shock! We hadn't even turned on our radio all day, preferring the peace and calm of the beautiful surroundings. We turned the radio on then, and the radio confirmed that yes, a typhoon named Welming (Emma) was headed straight for us. It was supposed to be a big one.



Since we were anchored in a cove unprotected from the West, we were practically in the open sea.

My father decided that we must make a run for Manila. Since it only took eight hours for us to reach White Sands Beach, he figured that it wouldn't take too much longer to go back the other way. At this point I remember a lot of commotion.

My mother told my father "No way am I going sailing in a typhoon with my three children". At that point my father told her that she and I could stay in the house on the beach (he knew the owners) and that he would head back to Manila with my two brothers. After mulling that one over for about a minute, my mother answered: "If you and our two sons are sailing this boat to Manila, Susan and I will be aboard"!

In hindsight, maybe we should have all stayed there and just let the boat ride it out in the harbor.

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All five of us worked furiously as we prepared the boat for the night ahead. The awning was taken down, the cushions were stored below, ropes were tightened, and sails were put up. As we lifted the dinghy, it seemed to weigh a ton, and we somehow managed to knock a hole into it, but we finally got it secured over the cabin. (With a hole in it, though, the dinghy would be very useless as a lifesaving device!)

By the time it was dark, we were out in the middle of the South China Sea. My dad followed his chart and shined his high powered search light on shore to make certain that we are far enough from land to miss the projecting reefs (There were reefs all over this area, and the Siboney's keel was at least 20 feet deep. He wanted to make sure we didn't hit a reef or run aground). In hindsight again, this might have been a good thing.

The night was suddenly extremely black. We passed close to a small fishing boat and my dad yelled "Typhoon". The word "Appreciate" echoed back across the waves as we moved on. We always wondered about that Filipino fisherman and hope he made it safely to home port before the storm hit.

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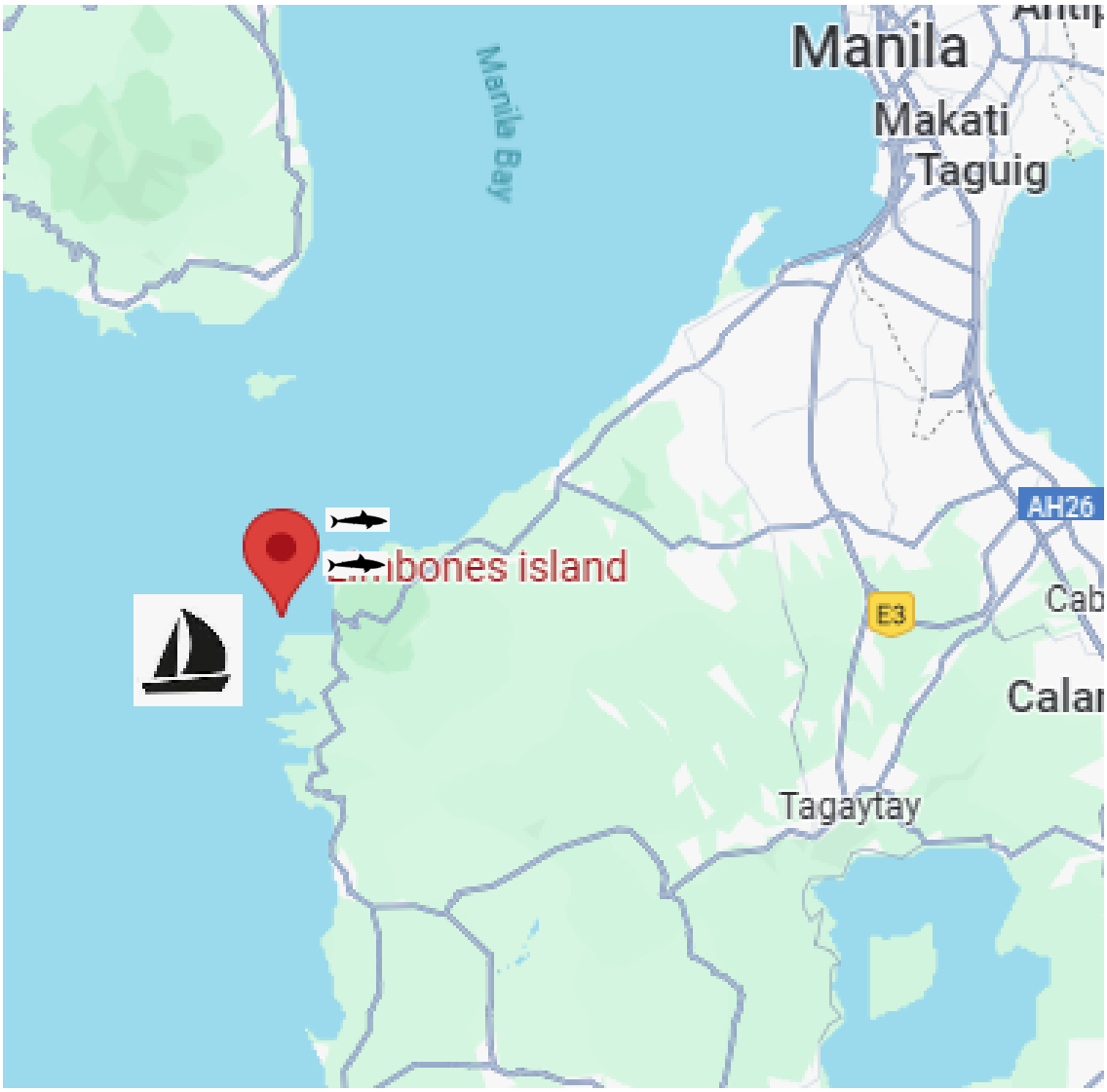
By about 8 p.m. we are out of the South China Sea and trying to enter Manila bay. However, we had trouble making it around Limbones point. The wind was coming straight off the point. We couldn't sail directly into the wind, so we had to make a series of "tacks", sailing diagonally from one side to another, trying to make forward progress. We lost precious time tacking back and forth, but finally made it around Limbones point.

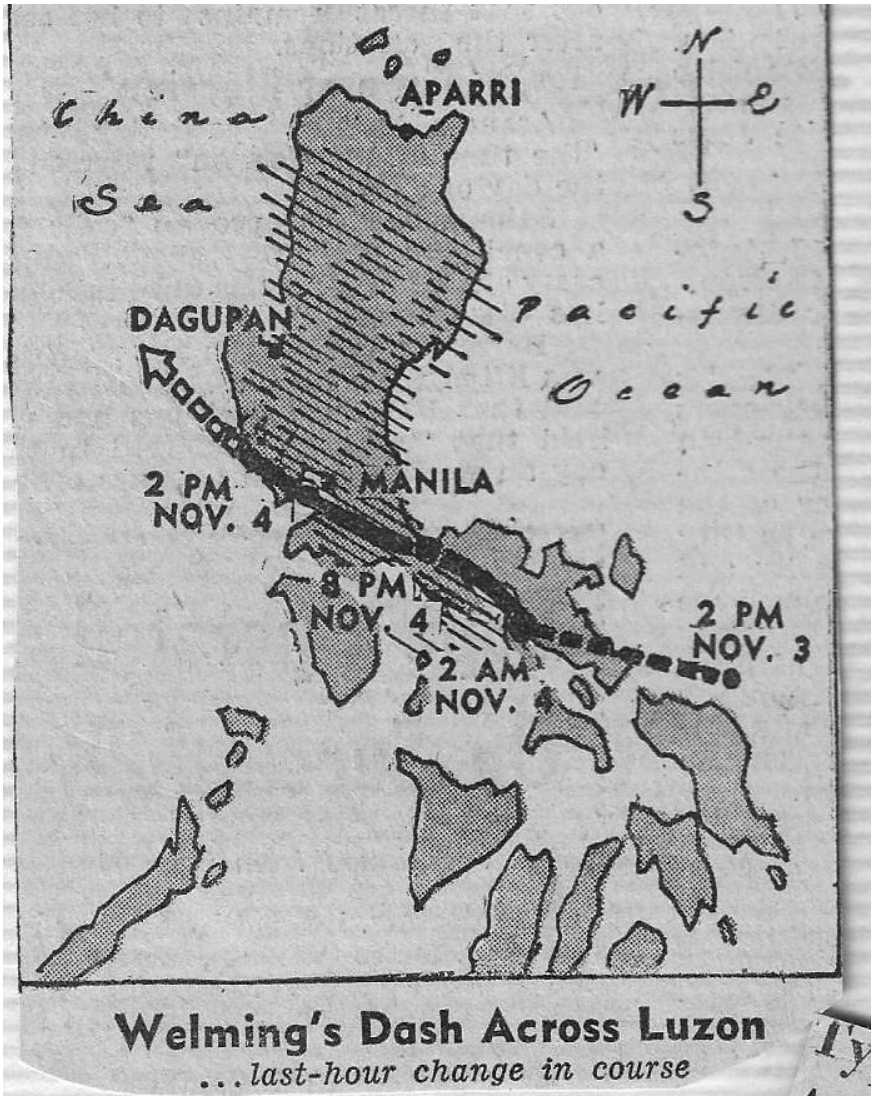
At the mouth of the bay, near Corregidor, a small island used by the American and Filipino forces during World War II for a last effort to fend off the Japanese invasion of the Philippines, Siboney was suddenly hit by a strong gust of cross winds and actually spun around in a complete circle --- out of control. The winds in this spot are always mean, because they funnel down from the mountains of Bataan, but my dad had never seen them this mean. Right after this happened, my dad ordered me and my two brothers to go down below, put on life jackets and stay there for the rest of the night. He was afraid one of us would fall overboard and disappear into the black, shark-infested waters.



As we finally made our way into Manila Bay (about 9 p.m.) the stars were still in the sky overhead and the lights of Manila were visible some thirty miles in the distance. Gradually the city lights faded as rain and black clouds covered the sky.

Far in the distance, near Manila, my mother spotted a moving light and asked my dad what it was. He said "It's a ship." We have always been curious about that vessel. Perhaps they were the ones who gave the report that they spotted a sailboat between Fort Drum and Cavite about 10 p.m. that night. That was exactly our location and we seemed to be the only sailboat in the bay that night --- Manila Bay was empty otherwise --- we were all alone. This ship might have been the Japanese freighter which sank that night near Manila harbor.

My father and mother took turns at the tiller, the long wooden stick attached to the boat's rudder. They aimed for Sangley Point's light. Sangley, a US Naval base about six miles from Manila had a strong beacon. The problem was that Sangley's light kept disappearing under the bigger and bigger waves. When they could spot the beacon again, after it was blocked by waves, the boat had often been turned in another direction.



As my mother steered Siboney that night, she prayed like she had never prayed before in her life. She asked God to see this family safely through the storm and home again. She prayed that the wind would change course. It was coming straight out of Manila. If only it were to come from in back of us, we could go flying home! The wind continued to blow straight out of Manila all night! My mother prayed for the typhoon to veer away from Manila. Many do. But this typhoon maintained its rigid course. She spoke to God all night long while sitting in the cockpit of that boat, bouncing around on Manila Bay, and God didn't seem to hear a word she said!!

The waves were now about as high as the mast of our boat. Outside everything was very dark and very windy. The waves pounded the boat so hard that the normally dry cabin was soaked. Waves would lift up Siboney like it was a small raft and then drop it so hard that I thought the boat would break into pieces. I think my mother's prayers worked that night, if only to keep the boat in one piece.

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Meanwhile, my two brothers and I were spending our time bouncing around the cabin. It was very dark, very wet, and extremely scary. I couldn't believe what was happening. One minute we were in a nice calm bay, and just a few hours later we were in the middle of our worst nightmare.

The cabin below is similar to how I remember Siboney's cabin. There was a long bunk on the other side of the table. I was on the short bunk and my brothers were on the long side. The bunks had safety slats that would help keep us from rolling out of the bunk.

I was holding on for dear life and sometimes felt like I was going to bounce right out of that bunk. My brother Jim actually did fall out. When we hit one very hard wave, he rolled very hard and broke the slat, fell out and hit his head. There wasn't anything anyone could do. He managed to get back into the bunk and hang on. Jimmy and Billy had refused a seasick pill. My mom and I had one and we were the only ones who didn't lose our dinner. The boys got sick over and over again, mostly all over the floor since there was no way to aim for the bucket. The bucket kept falling over anyway so it really didn't matter.

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About midnight, the wind was too strong for our sails and the motor. For every three feet gained toward Manila, we were pushed back 2 feet toward the South China Sea. It became very clear that we would not be able to reach Manila. We couldn't even get in as far as Sangley Point. My mother asked my dad "Could we try to sail across the bay and reach Esso's dock? (Esso was a big oil company). "Not with this wind", my dad replied. There was no place to go and our only hope was to sail up and down Manila Bay in a triangular or box like pattern until we got a wind shift --- or to ride out the typhoon. We had to stay away from land. Land is a great enemy during a storm since a boat can be broken into pieces if it hits rocks or reefs. We also had to watch out for Fort Drum, an eleven foot thick fort built by the United Stated during World War II and located in Manila Bay not too far from Corregidor. Fort Drum had no light, and this made it even more dangerous.

Suddenly, in the dark of the night, a flapping, banging noise came form the bow. Howling wind ripped our brand new, Dacron Yankee jib sail horizontally into three pieces. My dad came down into the cabin and got another jib, then fastened with his life-line safety harness, he went forward to the bow to take down the torn jib and put up the new one. My mother was left handling the tiller and tried to miss the bigger waves, but my dad was doused by waves more than once. The second jib went up; it lasted an hour or so, when it too was ripped to shreds by the wind. Our last storm jib must have been put up at about 3:00 am, but it too came down, this time after less than an hour.

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The worst part of the night was from about three a.m. until dawn. The motor went dead and water in the boat's electrical system caused all of the lights to go out. The sky was a roof of blackness, the moon completely hidden by the clouds of Typhoon Welming. Rain lashed down upon us. The wind, which had begun as a soft, low whistle, then increased to a moaning wail over the waves, was now howling and screeching all around us. Siboney rode over the crest of one giant wave, through another, then wallowed in the trough of the next.

If dawn would only come. Surely everything would be better if we could see something besides black, angry waves....

Dawn finally arrived, and with it --- the full force of the typhoon. All of our jibs were gone. We had only the rudder to steer by. My parents were both sitting on the floor of the cockpit, wearing safety harnesses that were tied to the mast with heavy ropes. Gigantic waves went over the entire boat. One wave I will never forget. A force from the sea beneath seemed to go under the port side tilting us to 80 or more degrees. The 40-foot mast dipped further, further toward port; then a solid mountain wall of water came thundering down from starboard like a direct broadside. Siboney hung suspended on her side for 20,30, 45 seconds. I don't know how long --- it seemed like an eternity.... and while the boat is hanging half in and half out of the sea. Soon, Siboney was back upright, thanks to her heavy keel.

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It looked as though the situation were hopeless. It was obvious we were not going to last much longer in the midst of this mighty storm. My father came to a decision. "I'm going to beach the boat. Go down and prepare the children", he shouted to my mother. This seemed the end. The shoreline, we knew, was all coral reef, rocks and jungle. She thought the boat would hit a reef too far from shore, break up, fill with water and all would drown. She also figured there were long lengths of rope in the cockpit. Perhaps my father could tie one around his waist, get to shore some way, and she could send each child down the rope later, monkey style.

She then made her way down to the cabin, telling us to hurry and check the life jackets, making sure they would inflate. My life jacket wouldn't inflate on the right side. We found another one & they helped me put it on. My mother explained to us that we were in the middle of a terrible typhoon (duh?), that my father was doing his best to save us, and that we must obey any command instantly without question or hesitation. She also explained that it was possible that not all of us would live, that perhaps this was part of a Greater Plan which we could not now understand. With that, she recited the 23rd Psalm, told us to pray and quietly turned everything over to God.

> *The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for thou art with me: thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou annoitest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.*

OK, I have to admit. This was terrifying. I had no idea what would happen. Would sharks eat us all? Would we all drown?

My mom stayed with us until the end. We waited. After a few minutes, as we were looking out through the small porthole we saw --- coming up fast --- a white sandy beach and a small cement house. It was a miracle. With the mainsail flapping and only a wooden rudder to guide us, my father was bringing the boat in toward the shore perfectly.

The waves, which were behind us now, were giving us big pushes toward the shore. We were surfing closer into shore with each wave. Hitting the sandy beach with a soft thud, the boat continued on another thirty or forty feet before it finally stopped almost out of the sea.

We climbed quickly out of the cabin and jumped from the bow of the boat into no more than waist deep water. A few local people from a little barrio saw the boat coming in, and a Filipino man held out his hand to help me ashore. Dripping with brown dirty Manila Bay water all over our faces, hair and life jackets, we looked like drowned rats and all five of us were joyously happy to be on solid ground.

Soon we were invited into the home of Mr. and Mrs. Dionisio Guilbert. Mr. Guilbert was Superintendent of the School of Fisheries where boys are taught fishing as a livelihood. The Guilbert family gave us dry clothes, hot coffee and sheltered us all of Saturday night until we were able to leave Sunday noon. I remember finally being dry and warm and finally feeling safe enough to close my eyes. By the grace of God and the help of the Guilbert family we had been saved.

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Sunday morning the weather was very calm and we went out to see the boat. She was laying on her side on the sandy beach, looking like a giant whale washed ashore. One side was badly damaged by the pounding surf. It turned out that we had been lucky indeed. We hit one of the very few stretches of sandy beaches in the bay and this path could not have been more than 200 feet wide, surrounded on each side by a long row of jagged rocks. A Filipino man said it well, "This was a Miracle. Your Guardian Angel must have led you in."

Mr. Guilbert asked one of his friends, who owned a motorized banca (small boat) to take us back to Manila. While we were on our way back we saw a plane circling overhead. It was my dad's friend, Dick Bartlett, who had lost the roof of his house in the storm, but was out searching for us.

The banca brought us all the way back to the Manila Yacht club in only an hour or so. We were that close all along but because of the storm we just couldn’t get there!

When we pulled into the yacht club we were spotted by a throng of friends who had been there waiting for any news about us. A couple of days later I was back in my seventh grade classes as though none of it had ever happened. For a few days, I felt like quite the celebrity with all the teachers and kids wanting to hear all about our experience. Looking back, it was an exciting experience which has given me an appreciation for life and how easily you can be thrust up to the edge between life and death. Not to mention, a touch of PTSD.

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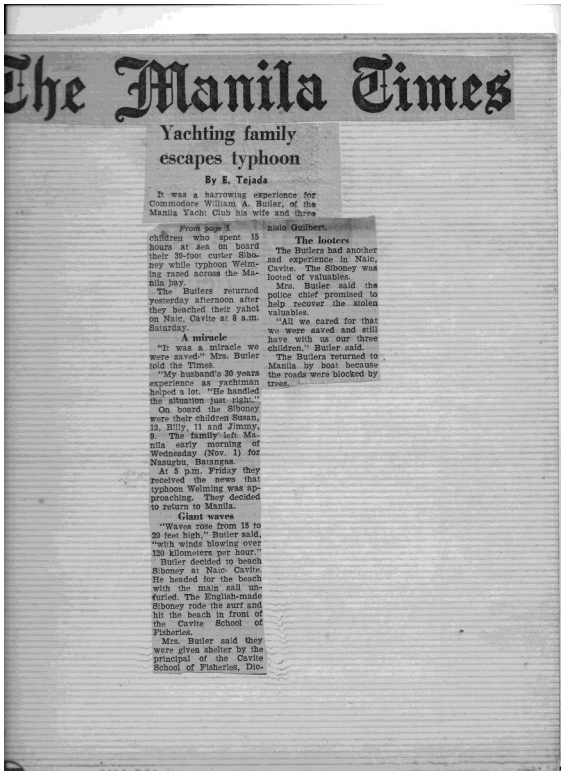
We went home to a reunion with my youngest brother and sister and were soon inundated with phone calls from friends and newspaper reporters. The story about the missing Butler family had been broadcast far and wide while we were riding out the typhoon. Even my father's parents in Miami, Florida had heard about the situation and were waiting for word from us. I think they were worried they would have to come rescue Sally and Joey!

HAS BUTLER FAMILY RETURNED SAFELY AFTER TYPHOON
WE STANDING BY FOR ANSWER
HOFFETT
INGENETRIC MANILA
POWERS ARE BUTLERS SAFE
TOKYO 24 7 1131
INGENETRIC MANILA
ATTN BUTLER YOU SURE KNOW HOW TO UPSET OLD FRIENDS STOP TOKYO PAPERS FULL OF MISSING BUTLERS STOP WE KNEW YOU WERE TOO GOOD A SEAMAN TO BELIEVE IT BEST REGARDS WILTSHIRE



The Manila Times

Yachting family escapes typhoon

By E. Tejada

It was a harrowing experience for Commodore William A. Butler, of the Manila Yacht Club his wife and three

From page 1

children who spent 15 hours at sea on board their 39-foot cutter Siboney while typhoon Welming raged across the Manila bay.

The Butlers returned yesterday afternoon after they beached their yahct on Naic, Cavite at 8 a.m. Saturday.

A miracle

"It was a miracle we were saved," Mrs. Butler told the Times.

"My husband's 30 years experience as yachtman helped a lot. "He handled the situation just right."

On board the Siboney were their children Susan, 12, Billy, 11 and Jimmy, 9. The family left Manila early morning of Wednesday (Nov. 1) for Nasugbu, Batangas.

At 5 p.m. Friday they received the news that typhoon Welming was approaching. They decided to return to Manila.

Giant waves

"Waves rose from 15 to 20 feet high," Butler said, "with winds blowing over 120 kilometers per hour."

Butler decided to beach Siboney at Naic, Cavite. He headed for the beach with the main sail unfurled. The English-made Siboney rode the surf and hit the beach in front of the Cavite School of Fisheries.

Mrs. Butler said they were given shelter by the principal of the Cavite School of Fisheries, Dionisio Guilbert.

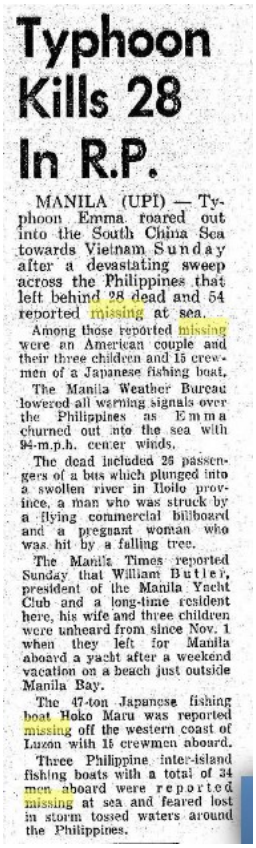
The looters

The Butlers had another sad experience in Naic, Cavite. The Siboney was looted of valuables.

Mrs. Butler said the police chief promised to help recover the stolen valuables.

"All we cared for that we were saved and still have with us our three children," Butler said.

The Butlers returned to Manila by boat because the roads were blocked by trees.



Typhoon Kills 28 In R.P.

MANILA (UPI) — Typhoon Emma roared out into the South China Sea towards Vietnam Sunday after a devastating sweep across the Philippines that left behind 28 dead and 54 reported missing at sea.

Among those reported missing were an American couple and their three children and 15 crewmen of a Japanese fishing boat.

The Manila Weather Bureau lowered all warning signals over the Philippines as Emma churned out into the sea with 94-m.p.h. center winds.

The dead included 26 passengers of a bus which plunged into a swollen river in Iloilo province, a man who was struck by a flying commercial billboard and a pregnant woman who was hit by a falling tree.

The Manila Times reported Sunday that William Butler, president of the Manila Yacht Club and a long-time resident here, his wife and three children were unheard from since Nov. 1 when they left for Manila aboard a yacht after a weekend vacation on a beach just outside Manila Bay.

The 47-ton Japanese fishing boat Hoko Maru was reported missing off the western coast of Luzon with 15 crewmen aboard.

Three Philippine inter-island fishing boats with a total of 34 men aboard were reported missing at sea and feared lost in storm tossed waters around the Philippines.

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Sailboat Hit by Typhoon

American Couple, 3 Kids Describe 15-Hour Ordeal

MANILA, Nov. 8 (UPI)—An American couple who lived through a 15-hour nightmare aboard a 39-foot sailboat with their three children on typhoon-tossed Manila Bay attributed their survival Tuesday to prayers, perseverance and plain luck, it was reported Wednesday.

★ ★ ★

William A. Bulter, an executive of General Electric Phils., his wife Elsie and children Susan, 12, Billy, 11 and Jimmy, 9, made it back safely to Manila Sunday afternoon after they were nearly given up for lost by anxious friends.

Except for Butler who suffered slight cuts on his hands and his wife who jestingly said: "I feel black and blue all over," everyone appeared none the worse after the ordeal although their sailboat had to be beached with its starboard side damaged.

"It was a miracle really," said Mrs. Butler, 38, of Angola, Indiana. But she was also full of praise for her husband and said, "He and his 30-year sailing experience saved our lives."

Butler, also 38, who was born and raised in Cuba before he became an American citizen, said: "It was quite an experience. I wouldn't want to do that too often. I don't know if my nerves will be able to take it again."

• • •

Butler, president of the Manila Yacht Club, said he had never encountered anything so harrowing as they did from about 5 p.m. Friday to 8 a.m. Saturday when their boat was slapped around by giant waves and lashed by blinding rain brought by typhoon Emma.

He said he and his wife stayed on deck throughout the night and until the following morning when they decided to beach the boat while their three children stayed in the cabin below.

"The elements were all against us," he said. "We kept tacking back and forth, waiting for a wind shift but it wouldn't come. We were riding straight into the wind almost throughout and the waves were coming us 15 to 20 feet high.

"We took about 12 to 15 really big waves which knocked me down several times and left us under water. But the boat rode out every one of them. Shortly before we beached, the winds were in excess of 75 miles per hour and were much stronger when we got ashore. If we didn't beach earlier, it would have been worse."

• • •

The Butlers and their three children were taken in by a Filipino couple, Mr. and Mrs. Dionisio Guilbert, after reaching shore at Naic, Cavite. They left for Manila Sunday aboard a small banca boat whose motor conked out from overheating when they were five miles from Manila.

Luck again turned up for the Butlers when a Dutch business executive, Jan Van Bloemen, came by on his own boat and towed the drifting banca into the Manila Yacht Club basin.

Butler said one of the first things he did upon reaching home was to call by overseas phone and inform his parents Mr. and Mrs. Harold A. Butler at the Dallas Park in Miami, Fla., that they were all safe. The Butlers have two other children, Sally, 5 and Joseph, 2 who were left at home.

The Butlers left Manila aboard their sailboat last Wednesday for a holiday trip to the white sands beach and neighboring islands outside Manila Bay. There were two other yachts anchored off the beach when the Butlers made a sidetrip to a nearby island. They said they were surprised to find the other two yachts gone when they returned.

They finally learned about the approaching typhoon late Friday afternoon and it was on the return journey to Manila that they ran into rough weather and the ensuing nightmarish ordeal.

"I have never sailed before in my life and there I was alone with my husband in the cockpit riding out the waves and the winds. I had to take a quick 10-minute sailing course from my husband," Mrs. Butler said. "A hundred waves must have come upon us and each one seemed to weigh 500 pounds, crashing all over my head to my life jacket. It was freezing cold."

"The winds were howling, screeching, moaning. We would go into one wave, go through it and roll on top of another. It was almost endless and really weird. I must have had a five-hour monologue with God out there."

• • •

She said she really didn't feel desperate until the following morning on Saturday when her husband decided to beach the boat instead of riding out the typhoon in the open.

"My husband's last order on the boat was for me to go below and prepare the children. I did—I prepared them for survival and I prepared them for death. I told them your father is trying to save you but we are in the middle of a terrible typhoon and I was not sure we will all get through it. I told them to start saying the 23rd Psalm. I thought I was not going to live through it and 10 minutes later, I was in warm clothes and sipping a hot cup of coffee," she said.

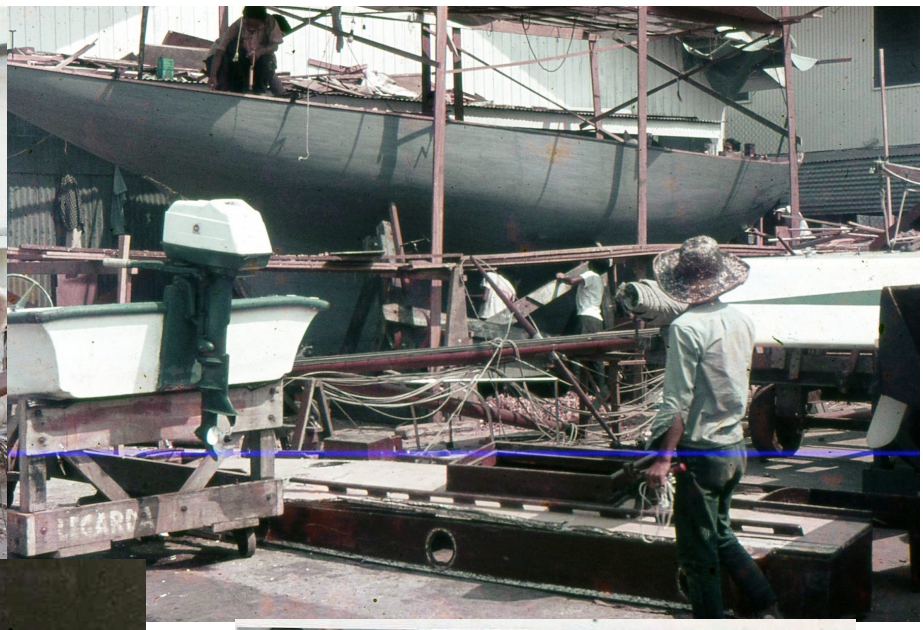
"I'm sure the Guardian Angel brought us in."

Butler said he discovered later that their boat barely missed reefs both to the left and to the right when they beached.

"It was Providence," he said. "It was blind luck."

My dad made arrangements to go pick up the boat and haul it back to Manila Yacht club. He soon had to hire a repair crew to put it back together. We didn't hit rocks until we got to shore but when we hit shore the rocks put a giant hole in the boat! There was a lot of damage.

They were all repaired, Siboney was officially rechristened and lived to sail many more days.



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I hope you enjoy Adventures of the Grandmas and the Grandpas #1.

More adventures to come!

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